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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Sixtieth year

Letter dated 22 March 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the pleasure to enclose herewith the press statement issued at the ninety-fourth regular session of the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which was held in Riyadh on 13 March 2005.

I would appreciate it if you would issue the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 36, 37, 62 and 148, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Tawfeeq Ahmed **Almansoor**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 22 March 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Press statement issued at the ninety-fourth regular session of the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council 3 Safar A.H. 1426 (13 March A.D. 2005)

The Ministerial Council held its ninety-fourth regular session on Sunday, 3 Safar A.H. 1426 (13 March A.D. 2005), in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the chairmanship of His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifah, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Bahrain and chairman of the current session of the Ministerial Council. Attending was His Excellency Abdul Rahman bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The Ministerial Council offers sincerest well wishes to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz, King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the occasion of the municipal elections, significant as these are in strengthening and firmly establishing the process of development and modernization, and beseeches God Almighty to ensure His Majesty's lasting health and well-being, give him succour and grant him good fortune. May he achieve for the fraternal Saudi Arabian people the progress, growth and prosperity to which they look forward under his prudent leadership and may he also continue to play a part in the auspicious work of the GCC.

The Ministerial Council expressed its strong condemnation of the evil bombing which took place in the Lebanese capital of Beirut on Monday, 14 February 2005, resulting in martyrdom of the former prime minister of Lebanon, Mr. Rafik Hariri, along with several of his escorts, and in injury to others. It offered its sympathies and condolences to the family of the deceased, to the families of the other victims and to the fraternal Lebanese people. It affirmed the full rejection by the GCC States of such terrorist acts, which target innocent lives and spread chaos and destruction. It further called on its Lebanese brothers to overcome the crisis, preserve Lebanon's unity and stability, reflect on dialogue between the different political forces and avoid any action that may sow disunion and division. It also called for a swift and transparent investigation into the assassination of the martyred leader Rafik Hariri.

The Ministerial Council applauded the decision of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to withdraw fully from Lebanon.

The Ministerial Council welcomed the hosting by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of the third summit meeting of heads of State of the Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries and the initiative of the State of Qatar to host the United Nations Human Rights Centre for South-East Asia and the Arab region. It also welcomed the adoption of and support for the draft resolution to be submitted to the sixtieth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The Ministerial Council reviewed the successes achieved since the previous session in various areas of joint cooperation, as well as developments in connection with regional and international political and security issues.

In regard to economic issues, the Ministerial Council examined the reports and minutes of numerous economic committees and reviewed the minutes of the eighth meeting of the ministerial committee on transport and communications concerning cooperation among the Gulf States in matters of transport. It also reviewed the progress in the draft economic feasibility study of the railway network. In addition, it reviewed the outcome of the visit by the GCC Secretary-General to the Republic of Yemen during the period 7-8 March 2005, including his meeting with senior officials there and his talks with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen, emphasizing that it was important both to continue and to strengthen cooperation between the GCC and the Republic of Yemen.

In regard to relations between the States of the GCC and those of the European Union, the Ministerial Council welcomed the convening of the fifteenth joint GCC-European Union ministerial meeting in the Kingdom of Bahrain on 5 April 2005.

In the area of human and environment affairs, the Ministerial Council considered the outcome of the meetings of the competent ministerial committees on cultural affairs, education, municipal affairs and scout organizations and associations. It also discussed the decisions reached by Their Highnesses and ministers of culture of the GCC States concerning a centre for people's heritage and took the necessary decision in that connection. In addition, it examined the decisions of the Council of Ministers of Health, in particular concerning the adoption of an instrument designed to ensure development of the health systems in the GCC States, the implementation of programmes for the prevention of communicable and non-communicable diseases, implementation of the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, and the establishment of the Gulf Council for Nursing Specializations. It stressed the importance of the latter in strengthening joint cooperation in the field of health.

In regard to military matters, the Ministerial Council examined the progress in military cooperation, particularly concerning the completion of arrangements for the joint defence agreement, as well as the progress of work on joint military projects and in the other areas in question.

Although satisfied with the measures and studies carried out, the Council stressed that it was important to complete the other outstanding matters in the field of military cooperation in the light of the decisions adopted in that regard.

In regard to security coordination and cooperation, the Ministerial Council examined recent security developments at the regional and international levels, in particular the growing phenomenon of terrorism and terrorist acts confronting the world. The Council emphasized the importance of tackling that problem, which continued to pose a threat to international peace and security. On the basis of the well-established positions of the GCC States on the subject, the Council reiterated its condemnation of the terrorist acts carried out by rogue elements in a number of GCC States and affirmed its support for all measures taken by the security apparatuses in the two States to counter such heinous acts.

In that context, the Council expressed its appreciation for the initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in calling for an international conference on counter-

terrorism, which was held in Riyadh during the period 5-8 February 2005. The Council asserted its welcome of and support for the Riyadh Declaration and the recommendations issued, most importantly the proposal of His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz concerning the establishment of an international centre for counter-terrorism, which will undoubtedly make a vital and effective contribution to supporting the international efforts to combat terrorism.

The Ministerial Council renewed its full support for and solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in regard to its efforts and the measures being taken to maintain security and stability and eliminate the rogue group which employs criminal terrorist acts systematically rejected by all religious laws and by humanitarian and moral values and principles. It also affirmed that the true Islamic religion is founded on justice, compassion and tolerance and that it prohibits and criminalizes the performance of any act in which innocent people are ultimately attacked and harmed, for Islam safeguards the innocent and forbids all killing of, threat to and torture of innocent persons.

The Ministerial Council surveyed the progress of security coordination and cooperation among the member States and expressed its satisfaction with the measures and steps adopted by those member States in the matter, particularly in regard to counter-terrorism.

The Ministerial Council considered the question of the continuing occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of the three islands of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, which belong to the United Arab Emirates, and reaffirmed its well-established positions, as follows:

- To support the rightful sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over its three islands and over the territorial waters, airspace, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone of those three islands, being an integral part of the United Arab Emirates;
- To express regret at the failure of contacts with the Islamic Republic of Iran to produce positive results conducive to resolution of the question of the three islands in order to promote the strengthening of security and stability in the region;
- To reject categorically the recent announcement by the Iranian Government of its intention to establish a memorial on the island of Abu Musa, which belongs to the United Arab Emirates and is occupied by the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to regard such action as an attempt to change the features of the island and as an act of provocation that is unhelpful to peaceful resolution of the existing dispute;
- To recall the resolutions of the Supreme Council that emphasize the pursuit of all peaceful methods leading to restoration of the right of the United Arab Emirates to its three islands;
- To invite the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to the efforts of the United Arab Emirates and the international community to resolve the question through direct negotiations or recourse to the International Court of Justice.

The Ministerial Council examined the overall developments in the situation in Iraq and, following a comprehensive evaluation, resolved as follows:

– To welcome the success of the electoral process in the brother country of Iraq, a process that is regarded as an important step along the political way towards the restoration of Iraq's full sovereignty and independence;

– To express the hope that this step will help in ensuring that the results of the Iraqi elections are used to achieve national reconciliation and establish unity among the Iraqi people of all groups and descriptions with a view to participation in the political process with the aim of building Iraq's future and achieving its prosperity;

– To underline the importance of involving the entire political spectrum in the political process and in the shaping of Iraq's immediate future;

– To reaffirm the rejection by the GCC States of any action that may fragment Iraq, as well as reaffirm the need for preservation of Iraq's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, for non-interference in its internal affairs and for all parties to commit to that same approach;

– To further condemn all bombings and terrorist acts targeted at civilians and at humanitarian and religious institutions, as well as the abduction and exemplary punishment of innocent people, and to express sympathies and condolences to the families of the victims of such crimes and solidarity with the countries concerned;

– To condemn the serious human rights violations perpetrated by the former Iraqi regime during its occupation of Kuwait, to reiterate its sincere condolences to the families of victims known to have died and its appreciation to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Tripartite Commission for seeking the Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners and missing persons whose fate and whereabouts are still unknown, to call on all parties to continue working together in order to bring an end to the matters pending in connection with this humanitarian question and to underline the importance of the return of Kuwaiti property and the national archives;

– To urge the United Nations, in cooperation with the Iraqi Government, to make every effort to secure the return of Kuwaiti property and the national archives of Kuwait, which were seized by the former Iraqi regime during the period of its occupation of Kuwait.

The Ministerial Committee reviewed the developments in the Palestinian question and in the Middle East peace process and resolved as follows:

– To congratulate and welcome President Mahmoud Abbas, who holds the chairmanship of the Palestinian National Authority, and to express hope that the new Palestinian Government will successfully continue to be united in solidarity and cooperation in meeting the challenges ahead so that the fraternal Palestinian people may achieve its aspirations for the establishment of its own independent State on its national soil, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital;

– To commend the prudence and sense of responsibility shown by the Palestinian leadership and influential forces on the Palestinian stage in dealing with developments and events in a positive manner likely to bring about calm, using such appropriate opportunities and circumstances as are available to resume negotiations and revive the peace process in order to serve their just cause and

thereby achieve the hopes and aspirations of the fraternal Palestinian people in obtaining all of their legitimate rights;

– To welcome the outcome of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit held on 8 February 2005, which affirmed the commitment of both parties to the ceasefire, and to express its hope that it will help to put the peace process back on track as soon as possible, in accordance with the principles and requirements contained in the road map, the Arab initiative and the resolutions that embody international legitimacy;

– To emphasize that the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace demands the full Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories in Palestine, from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights to the line of 4 June 1967 and from the Shab'a farmlands in southern Lebanon;

– To express appreciation to President George W. Bush for the ongoing efforts of the United States Administration aimed at preparing the right climate and providing the necessary support for the resumption of negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, and at using the positive atmosphere in the Middle East to move towards the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace for all parties, in which context the Ministerial Council congratulated Ms. Condoleezza Rice on her assumption of the office of United States Secretary of State and urged her to continue the effective efforts in that regard;

– To welcome the outcome of the London conference in support of the Palestinian Authority, held on 1 March 2005, to express appreciation for the tremendous efforts of the British Prime Minister Tony Blair aimed at reviving the peace process and to call on the Quartet to pursue the efforts to follow up implementation of the road map;

– To call on the international community to take action to turn the Middle East, including the Gulf region, into a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, and to bring pressure to bear on Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and subject all of its nuclear facilities to the international inspection regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to be regarded as a basis for any future security arrangements.

The Ministerial Council reviewed the developments in the situation in the Sudan and welcomed the signature of the final peace accord in Nairobi on 9 January 2005 between the Sudanese Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement as an important historic event that should bring to an end the tumultuous period in the history of the Sudan and promote the attainment of a similar peace accord for the region of Darfur so that security, stability and prosperity may be restored to our brother country of the Sudan.

The Ministerial Council welcomed the appointment of General Muhammad Ali Fadl Al-Nu'aymi of the Kingdom of Bahrain as Assistant Secretary-General for security affairs for a three-year term, with effect from 1 January 2005, and wished him ongoing success in his mandate.

Issued in Riyadh
Sunday, 3 Safar A.H. 1426
(13 March A.D. 2005)